

[Lizzie Powers]

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FOLKLORE

Miss Effie Cowan, P.W.

McLennan County, Texas.

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Interview with Mrs. Lizzie Powers, Mart, Texas. (white pioneer).

"I was born in 1866 at Bedias, Texas , in Grimes County. My father , Dr. George Wyche, with his family, came to Texas about the year 1859 from the State of Mississippi. He was a plantation owner and sold his plantation with the slaves and came to the new state of Texas, seeking a better climate for the health of his family.

"My father was one of three brothers who left their native state[.?] The other two were lawyers, one, James, married a Miss Bancroft from the North and [they?] freed their slaves , and moved to California, and from there . , the state of Washington, where he became a judge. The other brother, Beverly, went to Philadelphia ana became an attorney.

"There were two sisters who remained in Mississippi , [they?] were Mrs. Mary Wyche Thomas and Mrs. Fannie Wyche Morrison. Each one was a refuge , [One?] from the siege of Vicksburg, and the other from Jackson, Mississippi, when General Grant captured it.

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Both returned to their old home in Byrom, Mississippi. I can remember many stories told of the [hardships?] endured during the time they were in the cities during the war between the states.

"I can also remember the stories told of their trip to Texas after the war was over . to see my father in his last illness a few years after the war closed. Especially do I remember their mode of travel by boat and by stage . , How they had to wait for the Mississippi River to go down from one of its rises when they crossed the river. [???] 2 "When the war between the states broke out in 1861, my father joined the Confederate Army and went as a surgeon , . some Some time after his health failed and he was placed in the Post Office at Galveston, as I remember , as Post Master he served until the war closed. As a child, I can recollect hearing him tell of how sorely they needed medicine for the soldiers, such as morphine and whiskey, bandages and so on , ; how they had to use hotels for hospitals and when the wounded soldiers were brought in and they were out of bandages, they had to take the bed sheets and sterilize them to use in place of bandages.

"I can also remember the stories of how the city of Galveston went wild with joy when the blockade was lifted, leaving them free to secure those supplies they needed; how they celebrated in honor of General Magruder, both in Houston and Galveston, with banquets; how the Confederate soldiers, stationed at Galveston, were so royally treated by the residents since they had rescued them from this blockade and driven the Union soldiers out of the Bay.

"During the time my father was in the army, my mother taught a little school at Bedias and rode horseback, taking her two children, Fred and sister Laura. Sister Laura later became Mrs. Laura Cowan, a pioneer of the country around Mart. My older brother, Eugene, and sister Fannie stayed at home. Brother farmed and sister Fannie kept house. When my mother arrived at her school, they hid their horses in the thicket near by to keep the Union soldiers from taking them as they passed on their way to Galveston to re-join the Union men stationed there. 3 "After my parents passed away, my brothers and sisters moved

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to Bremond. Here[?] my brothers engaged in farming and sister Fannie married Mr. Jim Owens of the Reagan community. Sister Laura taught a little school near Bremond until she married Mr. Henry Clay Cowan, who had just come to this community from Tennessee with Mr. Owens.

"I lived with sister, Fanny Owens, for a few years and then, after my sister, Mrs. Cowan, moved to the Mart Community[?] I lived with her until I married Mr. Sam Powers in 1883. When my sister, Mrs. Cowan, first came to Mart, they had just begun to raise cotton. When they took it to Waco to the market, they hauled it by wagon train, a distance of twenty miles. By the time they reached Waco, it would be near the noon hour, so by the time they had marketed the cotton[,?] bought their supplies, it was too late to make the return trip, as it took four hours, so they usually spent the night in Waco. Mr. Cowan had a little store over where the old town of Mart was located.

"In 1880, Mrs. Cowan taught the first six months school ever taught in Mart, in the first Baptist Church, where the Mart cemetery is now located. This was a long building made of rough box lumber with old home made benches. All the children old enough to attend school in the whole community east of Big Creek came to this school. There were twenty-eight pupils. The name of both the school and church was Willow Springs; it was later changed to Mart. The following families were represented in this little school—these names were taken from an old roll book kept by Mrs. Cowan; one page of the roll book is missing and only the names of twenty-two pupils can be given: John Suttle, Daniel , Suttle, Ike Suttle, Gus Douglas, Kate Douglas , A. E. Young, Daniel Young, Hattie Pevyhouse, Mamie Shelton, 4 Clarence Stephens, George Tidwell, Tommie Douglass, Eddie Hunter, Joe Hunter, Mary Vaughan, Nora Vaughan, Watts Vaughan, Mattie Douglas, George Douglas, Annie Chancelor, George Arnold, Philip Arnold. The Suttle children were sons of the pioneer Baptist minister , Shuttle. Many of these and the teacher, Mrs. Cowan, have answered the last roll call.

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"In my sister's notebook are the names of the first ten families to settle between 1877 and 1880 at Big Speck at Willow Springs. These were Albert Breland, W. H. Criswell, Perry Douglass, Pines Shelton, W. B. Stodghill, H. C. Cowan, W. H. Francis, H. T. Vaughan, Mr. Arnold, Mr. Brooks and a young man named Willie Easter, who lived with Mr. Brooks. To the best of my knowledge, all these men have also died.

"I have often thought of the difference in the country here in 1877 when my sister, Mrs. Cowan, came to this community and now. Then, this was just after the Indian depredations had ceased, the range was free and open as the crow would fly, abounding in deer, wild turkey, wild hogs and all the wild animals that lived in this country. The cattle, horses, sheep and goats grazed on the hills and prairies near the water holes, and old Willow Springs over near the cemetery was one of their favorite watering places.

"In 1883, I married Mr. Sam Powers, who was a ranchman and lived ten miles north-east of Marlin, in the vicinity of Big Creek. He was a grandson of grand-father Elijah Powers who joined the Robertson colony in Tennessee and came with General Robertson to old Nashville in 1834, where he lived for a year and then moved to East Texas, and in 1844, came to Falls County and settled on a league of land which the Mexican government gave him, when Mexico was giving the colonists land for the 5 settling of the state.

"Grandfather Powers had five sons, William, who died in Falls County; Lewis B., who took part in a number of Indian fights and died in Fall County, also; Andrew Jackson, who was killed in the Indian fight following the Marlin-Morgan massacre. I will tell you about this fight as it has been handed down through the times to us, from the other two brothers who were also in this fight. In the excitement of the battle, Jackson was wounded and fell off his horse. His brothers and companions stopped and tried to put him back on the horse.

"The horse was so frightened that he plunged so they could not get him on the horse. He told them 'that he knew he was killed and for them to leave him and save themselves, before they too were killed.' The two brothers were William and Lewis who were in this

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fight, and the story has been handed down by them. Jackson was killed, but his self-sacrifice for his companions will live as long as there is a Powers left to tell the story.

“This fight was between the settlers and the Indians, on the high-way between Waco and Marlin, ten days after the Morgan-Marlin massacre; the whites were led by Captain Benjamin Bryan of Bryans Station and the noted Indian chief, Jose Maria, led the Indians. This fight occurred in 1839.

Other sons of Grandfather Powers were Elijah and Francis, the father of my husband. Francis settled in Falls county and engaged in ranching until he enrolled in the Confederate army. He served the duration of the war. He returned and helped in the organization of Falla County. He died in January of 1877. He reared a family of six children. His eldest son, Joe, was a stockman of Falls county who moved to Archer Edward 6 county, where he died. Tom, another son, moved to Archer county. My husband, Sam, lived near Mart. A daughter, Mary, married William Waite of Reagan; another son, Frank moved to Falls County and still another son, John, lived at Reagan. All these are deceased.

“After I married, I lived on the ranch in Falls County, which was ten miles north of Marlin. I lived there about twenty years. By this time, the railroad had reached Marlin and we sent our cattle there to be shipped by train to the Northern markets. The Powers brothers who remained on the ranch, worked together and marketed their herds together. The range was owned by individuals; but there were wild cattle that were rounded up with the ranch herds. Sometimes a small bunch of ranch cattle were herded out in the open range on moonlight night to draw the wild cattle, scattered in the timber, into these herds. The wild cattle belonged to the one who first put a brand on them.

“A man did not need much money to buy a herd in those days, for cattle were cheap. A big beef steer would sell for around ten dollars. Only enough money was needed to bear the expenses of rounding up the cattle and taking them to market. I have heard how when

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they were driven up the trail, the inspector was first notified. After he came and inspected them, he would tally them and the road brand would be placed on each cow. The inspector gave the trail boss a pass on his herd to show they had been inspected. The inspector put the tally on record in the county clerk's office. Other cattle men could look at this record, and if they found any cattle with their mark or brand, the owner of the herd would pay him for what he had rounded up and that belonged to the other fellow, if he was an honest man.

“About 1901, we moved to Edwards County and lived fifteen miles 7 from Rock Springs, the nearest post office. Our nearest market was Kerrville, a distance of ninety miles, over very rough, rocky roads and mountains. Kerrville is about 75 miles north-west of San Antonio, on the Guadalupe River. To this town, we had to send our produce by wagon train, to which from six to eight head of horses were driven. In making the trip, the Guadalupe River was crossed eleven times, due to the winding of the road. The country was wild and beautiful.

“We had a stock ranch, and raised sheep, goats, cattle and horses. Some grain, mostly enough to feed the stock. It was a common thing to meet people who had never seen cotton grow; or had seen a train. As for negroes, one time one came to Rock Springs, and it was like a circus with the people coming to see him. Rattlesnakes were numerous. There were many, under every rock, but few fatalaties, for people knew their hiding places and kept away.

“When our children were old enough to enter school, we returned to Central Texas because it was fifteen miles out west to the nearest school. I have lived on the ranch for months without seeing another woman.